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STATE ALSO PASS TO USAID  
USAID/W FOR A/AID ANDREW NATSIOS, JBRAUSE  
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DCHA DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR WILLIAM  
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ANE DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR MARK WARD  
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KATHMANDU FOR OFDA REGIONAL ADVISOR WILLIAM BERGER  
GENEVA FOR USAID KYLOH  
ROME PASS FODAG  
NSC FOR MELINE  
CDR USPACOM FOR J3/J4/POLAD  
USEU PASS USEC

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: SRI LANKA - EARTHQUAKE AND TSUNAMIS:  
USAID/DART SITREP #24 - Shelter Assessment of  
Southern Coast

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Summary  
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1. Following an assessment of the east coast, the USAID/Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) Shelter Specialist, USAID/Disaster Assistance Response Team (DART) Information Officer (IO), and USAID/Colombo Project Management Assistant traveled to Hambantota and Galle Districts on May 6 and 7 to monitor USAID/OFDA-funded transitional shelter programs and review the progress of the shelter sector in tsunami-affected areas on the southern coast of Sri Lanka. The USAID team met with representatives from USAID-partners GOAL and Community Habitat and Finance International (CHF) during the field visit. While problems remain with labor and supply shortages and local government regulations, construction of transitional shelter is progressing steadily on the southern coast, with USAID partners playing a key role in coordination and planning. End summary.

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Hambantota - GOAL - Upgrading temporary shelters  
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12. According to U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) May 2 statistics, 14,523 persons were displaced in Hambantota District and 4,030 homes were damaged or destroyed. According to the Government of Sri Lanka's (GOSL) Transitional Accommodation Project (TAP), 1,283 of the 1,762 transitional shelters (73 percent) had been completed as of May 6. USAID/OFDA provided \$1,280,423 million to GOAL for the construction of transitional houses, repair of homes, and construction of latrines in Hambantota, Ampara, and Matara Districts.

13. GOAL is the official lead shelter agency in Hambantota District and the only agency providing transitional shelter in Ambalantota Division. To date, GOAL has completed 145 shelters in Ambalantota and Kirinda Divisions of Hambantota District, 780 in Ampara District, and 250 in Matara District. In March, when GOAL began constructing the structures, housing standards required a total cost of \$300 per shelter but that standard has since increased to \$400 a shelter. As a result, GOAL is now retrofitting the shelters with separate kitchens.

14. These cost limits are important for coordination in the shelter sector because they allow for certain standards to be followed and limit competition between agencies working in the shelter sector. Unfortunately, some agencies are reportedly not following the cost guidelines and are trying to attract beneficiaries with shelters that cost more than the agreed upon standards. In Hambantota, the total cost per shelter increased because some agencies stated that they were having difficult designing and constructing quality shelters within those price limits. However, as cost guidelines increase, organizations must

upgrade previously constructed shelters and decrease the number of shelters that they are able to construct under fixed funding.

15. Prior to constructing the transitional shelters, GOAL conducted a detailed assessment of the area including damage assessment, land use, inundation line, and services in order to understand how transitional and permanent shelter options would affect the entire community. GOAL has also actively promoted community awareness. For example, GOAL took beneficiaries to a site for permanent shelters that the GOSL is building so they could make an informed decision about whether to move into those shelters. In addition, GOAL worked with the community in Ambalantota to ensure that residents could construct transitional shelters in the community, either on their own land or with friends and relatives. According to GOAL, residents will remain in the transitional shelters for approximately 18 months.

16. Although the government has stated that construction of transitional shelters will not be allowed in the buffer zone, enforcement of these regulations has been weak. During the visit to Hambantota, the USAID team observed a large number of transitional shelters - frequently of very poor quality - built by both private individual donors and national and international NGOs within the 100 meter buffer zone. USAID-partners are not building transitional shelter within the buffer zone.

17. During the visit, the USAID team went to the local government's coordination office and met with a TAP official. According to the TAP, more than half of the fully and partially damaged homes (1,478 total) are outside of the 100 meter buffer zone in Hambantota District. In total, the tsunami affected 14,344 families in Hambantota

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District.

18. According to the TAP, the GOSL has already constructed 681 permanent houses in Hambantota District and is working on an additional 500 on a site 8 kilometers from Hambantota town. The government has announced plans to encourage government and retail buildings at the site so it will not be so isolated. The USAID team visited this site and noted that the houses appeared to be poorly constructed. In addition, the houses were laid out in long straight rows, instead of communal groupings. The entire site had been graded and cleared making the site hotter and more prone to drainage problems. According to GOAL, local officials in Hambantota District may be overlooking transitional shelter in the desire to advance quickly with permanent shelter construction.

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Galle - CHF - Building capacity  
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19. USAID/OFDA provided \$2.0 million to CHF for the construction of transitional shelters, repair of homes, and construction of latrines in Galle and Matara Districts. CHF explained that although Sewalanka is officially the lead for coordinating shelter in Galle District, CHF has become the de facto coordinator due to Sewalanka's lack of capacity. CHF estimates that 30 to 60 percent of all the transitional shelters in Galle were built by small agencies and 15-20 were built by the families themselves. CHF has completed approximately 450 shelters in Galle District and 128 in Matara District to date.

10. In order to provide livelihood opportunities and increase the pool of skilled laborers, CHF conducted a skills training in masonry and carpentry. Participants were paid and received new tools and a certificate of completion following 10 days of training. Initially, CHF could only complete 6 shelters a day but now due to increased training, CHF is able to complete 30 shelters a day. CHF will hold some transitional shelter materials in reserve while affected people decide what they would like to do and in order to repair shelters built by other organizations. CHF plans to continue its transitional shelter program through the end of the monsoon season at the end of July.

¶11. The USAID team visited a tent camp in Hikkaduwa Division which CHF had been upgrading. CHF had begun a program to improve the camp by adding shade to the tents and digging drainage ditches. However, the residents informed CHF that they had other shelters and were just using the tents during the day in order to collect assistance. CHF stopped the program to improve the site.

¶12. The USAID team also visited a site in Halwathura, Ambalangoda Division, Galle District where CHF had relocated approximately 19 families in February. This was a squatter community of poor fisherman that had been camping next to a crematorium following the destruction of their homes in the tsunami. The residents showed great pride in their shelters, planting gardens, drying fish, and inviting the USAID team inside to see the other improvements they had made. The men in the community rent boats twice a month, paying half of their catch to the boat owner. Following the recommendation of the USAID team, CHF will move the two water tanks servicing the camp away from the road closer to the latrines so that the community can more easily access the water and women will have more privacy for bathing.

¶13. In Patabandimulla, Ambalangoda Division, the USAID team visited a site where CHF had provided transitional shelters on beneficiaries own land. Some residents constructed the shelters on the foundation of their old houses, while others constructed them next to the old foundation depending on their reconstruction plans. This situation, in which residents are able to rebuild on their own land, is an ideal situation for transitional shelter. Because beneficiaries are already on their own land, they can immediately begin the process of transforming and making investments in their shelter, integrating the transitional shelter into their permanent structure.

¶14. In a meeting with the Divisional Secretary (DS) for Balapitya Division in Galle District, the DS reported to the USAID team that the government has not yet decided whether people can build businesses on their land in the buffer zone, but the DS thought that preference would be given to larger tourism-oriented businesses. The DS estimated that all permanent shelters in Galle would be finished in nine months, even with delays caused by the coming monsoon.

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Comment

¶15. The transitional shelter sector has advanced progressively on the southern coast despite the high levels of damage in the area. Although agencies are having difficulty finding land for transitional shelter, the situation is better than the eastern coast where the buffer zone is twice as large (200 meters versus 100 meters). However, the increased land area available on the southern coast does not mean that relocation of residents will not continue to be a major problem. The higher level of development and population density on the southern coast greatly limits the availability of suitable free land. In addition, similar to the eastern coast, competition between NGOs, weak local government decision making, and poor construction and design continue to afflict transitional sector activities. However, the USAID team notes that USAID shelter partners on the eastern and southern coasts continue progressing steadily while constructing high quality structures, following agreed-upon standards for cost, materials, and design.

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